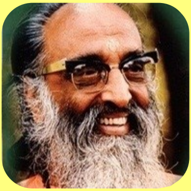
Patrika

Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles

MAY 2015



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CHINMAYA MISSION
LOS ANGELES
Vedanta, Wisdom, Spiritual Growth

Chinmaya Rameshwaram
14451 Franklin Ave
Tustin, CA 92780-7012

Upcoming Events

Valmiki Ramayana by Swami Ishwarananda	Jun 1-4	6:30 am - 7:30 am 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm
CHYK Class: Break the Bondage by Swami Ishwarananda	Jun 10	7:30 pm - 8:30 pm
CHYK Graduation	Jun 14	8:00 am - 9:30 am
Gita Jnana Yagna **Talk on Bhagavad Gita Chapter 4** **by Pujya Swami Tejomayanandaji**	**Jun 28-Jul 4**	**7:00 pm - 8:30 pm**
Details *of daily cultural events is available on website* **Special Guru Paduka Puja with Pujya Guruji** ***Limited spots** Visit website for registration details*		
Guided Vedic Chanting by Swami Ishwarananda	Every Saturday	6:30 am - 7:30 am

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Thus Spake The Master

Be sweet to everyone. You may be one day sad or angry or tired. But nothing is an excuse for you to behave bad to others, if you can't be sweet to others, always, then go to bed and don't come out!!

- Swami Chinmayananda

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Words Of The Wise

When one sees somebody talking ill about another, he should put a stop to it right away and not allow that person to keep talking. When the wrong thing is repeated ten times, we often become convinced that it is right.

- Swami Tejomayananda

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THINK!

Look Beyond

USA
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Over Thirty Years Of Service To Humanity

SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA
100
1916-2016
UNTO HIM OUR BEST

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Journey toward unknown begins
on knowing the limits of the intellect
True devotion emanates through
realization that God cannot be owned!
That service is most noble when
work is done with no choice but just rejoice!
Wisdom is complete and enduring when
the books are known as only the means
Engaging in serving Guru's vision is
only way to remain steadfast in the Self!

- Swami Ishwarananda

for e-Satsang blog, click here

TOP

At His Feet: Pujya Gurudev's 99th Birthday

To mark the 99th birthday of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji, a Guru Paduka puja was performed by Swami Ishwarananda on May 8.

The altar was decorated beautifully in orange and white and the air was filled with the fragrance of fresh flowers. The puja environment was filled with love and deep reverence from all who participated in it. Devotees sang soul-moving bhajans. Many went down the memory lane reminiscing about their meetings with Gurudev and shared his words with all. After the puja, everyone shared prasad.

Thus began the commemoration of the birth centennial year (1916-2016) of Pujya Gurudev at Rameshwaram.

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Amidst Nature, CHYK Study and Practice Contemplation

Fifty CHYKS spent Memorial Day weekend bonding, seeking, and learning the art of contemplation under the tutelage of Swami Ishwaranandaji at the Alpine Meadows Camp Retreat Center.

Although primarily organized by CMLA, the CHYKs came not only from all around Southern California, but also the Bay Area, and even Chicago!

Throughout the camp, these students were given the opportunity to learn contemplation through classes by Swamiji, workshops, discussions with one another, and practice.

At first, Swamiji explained the necessity of contemplation and showed how the mind seeks happiness through desires and vasanas, and how, as humans, we could overcome the anxieties and agitations of the mind through the practice of contemplation. Through discussion questions, the CHYKs were able to quieten their minds and practice contemplation for ten minutes after most classes. Using the Hollywood movie Divergent, Swamiji showed how it is necessary for us to be outwardly part of society, but inwardly free.

The CHYKs were also given the chance to break up into groups based on their university locations and attempt to create study groups on their campuses themselves.

The CHYKs also took advantage of the beautiful mountain environment and fresh air by participating in daily yoga sessions and outdoor activities like archery and ropes course at the retreat center. Many took hikes to the nearby river, the lake, and woke up to see the sunrise most mornings. Although the weather was quite chilly, the CHYKs were undeterred and took every chance to spend quiet contemplation outside through sports, hikes, or even just sitting outside. Every evening session concluded with aarati at the altar set up by the CHYKs.

On the last evening of the camp, CHYKs presented Carnatic vocal, bhajan and flute performances; and danced to Bhangra tunes as part of the cultural program. Later in the night, the CHYKs lit tea-light candles and arranged them in the form of a Chinmaya Om and unanimously recited the Chinmaya Pledge aloud as dedication to Gurudev. The camp ended with a wonderful bonfire at night, where CHYKs briefly did Garba and roasted vegan marshmallows. Everyone enjoyed sumptuous varieties of vegetarian meals and snacks throughout the camp duration.

All of this was not possible without the help of our wonderful volunteers, the Alpine Meadows staff, and of course Swamiji's guidance!

TOP

Reflections On Guruji

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda will visit Chinmaya Rameshwaram from June 28-July 4, this year. As CMLA readies in excitement to welcome him and eagerly wait to hear him speak on "Foster your Freedom" based on the Bhagavad Gita, ***Patrika*** *brings to you the reflections of a few members who have had the blessed opportunity to have spent time in his presence and to have learned at his feet.*

Swami Ishwarananda

SWAMIJI: It was in 1989 that I first met Pujya Guruji. As secretary of Chinmaya Yuva Kendra in Bangalore, I was involved in organizing Guruji's gyana yagna, just before his scheduled departure for the US. The entire week was very enlightening to me, an uninitiated student of Vedanta. His morning talks were on *Advaita Makaranda*, an advanced Vedanta text on which Guruji himself has written the commentary. His depth of knowledge was stupendous. After the successful series of talks, when he was leaving from Bangalore someone asked him about how he felt about leaving India. His quick reply: 'As He wishes!' Those words made an intense impression on me as I once again saw the humility that exuded from him whenever he spoke of Pujya Gurudev. Many might have noticed this trait in Pujya Gurudev too, whenever he spoke about Swami Tapovanam. The statement *vidyaa dadaati vinayam - wisdom gives humility* is fully demonstrated by the two brilliant teachers of Vedanta!

In 1992 when I was studying at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in Mumbai, a Bhagavata Saptah by Guruji was held. Students at Sandeepany were transported to the city where the talks were held. On the first day, it was Pujya Gurudev who inaugurated the event and he specifically remarked: He will touch your heart, don't miss it! When Guruji began his first talk, emotions overwhelmed him as he saw Gurudev sitting in the front row as one among the audience. Guruji's mother was also present. He couldn't speak for some time. When he finally began, he said, 'I see Bhagavan in front of me. How can I speak? Also my mother is sitting next to Bhagavan!'

None of us could hold back our tears….

Guruji's patience and compassion are incomparable. He can win any heart with just a few words. His ability to engage the right person for every task has made him the successful leader and visionary that he is. After the *Mahasamadhi* of Pujya Gurudev he has been walking along with senior members who have served Gurudev by listening to their suggestions and he has been living as the fountain of inspiration for many who have not met Pujya Gurudev. I personally feel so blessed to have been initiated by him into the Sanyasa order and also guided by him while I was teaching in Sandeepany, Mumbai. He is not only a person of self-confidence but also one who trusts in the goodness of all people. There is a lot to learn from this living master - from the wisdom that he shares through his lectures, to observing the way he carries on his daily chores with cheerfulness.

I offer my sincere salutations at his lotus feet. Hari Om!

Mukta Patel

MUKTA PATEL: I remember a very somber young Swami, very much liked by all. I perceived him as my Gurubhai. He was there in several of the camps which I attended. I would sit and all the time seemed focused all the time on absorbing what Gurudev was saying. He was and is, good with music - what Maharashtrians call Bhavgeet. The emotions and love for the Lord is evident in his compositions. We all loved to listen to him sing and looked forward to him sing in the evenings during the camps.

The incident that I still remember is from the Pomona camp. He tried to learn and shape up his driving skills. Every afternoon he would drive my Lexus 400. He did not like speed limits and we shared many a laugh during this time.

I organized the Dandia Raas for the Bala Vihar children at the Pomona camp and Swami T (children called him that) sat and watched it along with all the other items that evening. These were the last days when he was like a Gurubhai.

And then it happened. Gurudev took Samadhi. And he had to become the head of huge organization. I could see the change. He never again asked to drive my Lexus.

I recently sought an answer for a tough question when I saw him in Kolvan, India. The answer was to let children be free to make their own decisions. Be supportive and give guidance in their young days but never try to tell them or dictate your terms after they come of age, he said.

I have aged and he has reached the heights in the Mission but I miss that young Swami who was like a bhai to me but we love him as he is now, our Guruji.

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Mindfulness is Focus of CM Bakersfield's Annual Seminar

Chinmaya Mission Bakersfield and Bakersfield Memorial Hospital held their 11th annual seminar on Mind Body Health on May 16. This year the topic was "Mindfulness."

Dr. Anil Mehta introduced the subject by talking about the stress of modern life and how living mindfully can help.

Dr. Ravi Goklaney, a local psychiatrist and educator discussed the problems of Reactive stress and Depression and Chronic stress and Depression. Reactive stress is situational due to financial and personal loss. This can be helped by Mindfulness and regular meditation. Chronic stress and Depression has a congenital component and can be aggravated by situational problems. This needs medication and counseling. Mindful Meditation can be an adjunct in therapy.

The next speaker was Barbara White, Spiritual Director of the Center for Spiritual Living, Bakersfield. She said most of our stresses are due to past regrets and anxieties of the future. Living mindfully in the Now helps solve a lot of stressful situations. Quoting from an article about the CEO of Aetna who has been practicing mindfulness and meditation and also offers it to all employees of the company, she pointed out that under his leadership the company's income and stock value had appreciated significantly.

Swami Ishwarananda was the third speaker. Swamiji said that this knowledge is ancient and is described in the Upanishads as 'contemplation.' He spoke about the Pancha Kosha, the five layers of our personality. Each layer, he said , is subtler than the previous and more pervasive. The grosser can be controlled by the subtler. These layers cover our perception of the Self which is our true nature. Mindful living and meditation is the way to contact our inner Self. Swamiji led all in a beautiful guided meditation on nature.

The seminar ended with a panel discussion moderated by Stafford Betty, Professor of Religious studies at Cal State University, Bakersfield. The Q&A that followed was a lively one. Everyone left the seminar feeling informed and uplifted.

TOP

Winners of Regional Geeta Chanting Competition Awarded

Congratulations to winners of Regional Geeta Chanting Competition held at Rameshwaram on Apr 25. Winners are eligible to participate in the National Competition on September 5 & 6 in Chicago. Click here for winner list.

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Brea BV Graduation Led by Student Presentations

The Brea Bala Vihar graduation took place on May 17 in the presence of Acharaya Mahadevanji and Viji ji. Excited students, dressed up and came ready in costumes to enact, chant and narrate the stories, values and characters they had learned through the year.

The program started off with an inspirational talk from Mahadevanji featuring a story called The Giving Tree and an uplifting song originally sung by Frank Sinatra about an ant who never gave up.

The students from the Junior 1 class chanted the opening prayers followed by Junior 2 who chanted the Hanuman Chalisa and Saraswathi Stotram. The Intermediate class sang the Madhurastakam and explained the values from the Ramayana. They looked absolutely amazing in their costumes and depicted their assigned characters really well. They also added a beautiful rendition of a Ram bhajan and danced to it. The Yuvakendra students invited those graduating talk about their experiences and the values and lessons they had learned in their time at Bala Vihar.

The Shikshavalli chanting the concluded the graduation ceremonies, was led by Mahadevanji and Vijiji. The entire Bala Vihar took time, after this for volunteer and teacher appreciation. The final session of the Bala Vihar year concluded with the Chinmaya pledge and aarati.

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Valley BV Graduation Spotlights Students, Gurudev Centenary

On May 17 the San Fernando Valley Bala Vihar held its graduation ceremony at the Valley Hindu temple in Northridge. The event was emceed by two students from the senior class and was blessed by the presence of Swami Ishwarananda.

The graduation program started with the welcome dance performed by two students followed by class presentations including alphabet values, skits on Kubera's Feast and Pippalada's Boon. The senior group presented the importance of Shivaratri. After narrating the story of Gurudruha, the students shared their personal experience about transformation in their personal life.

Spotlight was also shown, during the program on the birth centenary celebrations of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji. Emcees spoke about the Chinmaya Jyoti, paduka pujas, the making and screening of the movie 'On a Quest' and the release of the commemorative coin by the Prime Minister of India.

The graduation ceremony concluded with the singing the Janam Dinam for Swami Ishwarananda's 50th birthday. Coordinator Madhu Sharma wrote and sung two songs for Swamiji's birthday.

Towards the end of the ceremony the students, parents and the teachers took the Prasad from Swamiji.

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Warm Ceremony at Redlands BV

Little ones charmed and won the hearts of parents and visitors at the samll yet yet warm graduation ceremony which saw them chant shlokas and enjoy playing characters from the holy texts. Acharya Mahadevanji and Viji ji were present to bless the children and extend their good wishes to on their moving on to the next class that will begin in Fall.

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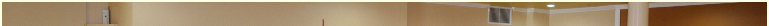
Children Display Love and Respect for Mothers

Rameshwaram

On Mother's Day, May 10, Bala Vihar children performed the Matru puja as a mark of their love and gratitude for their parent. They washed and offered flowers at their mother's feet. Several children were vocal in their appreciation for their mother – from the fact that she cooked and fed them to her being their emotional support. Keeping with CMLA tradition, Bala Vihar fathers cooked and served food to all mothers and children. The delicious food sought several mothers to stop by for asking recipes from the fathers!

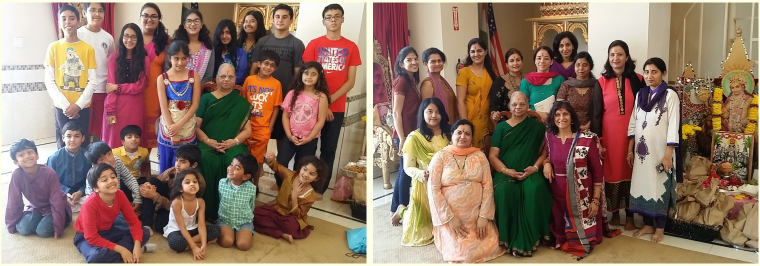


Valley

San Fernando Valley Bala Vihar celebrated Mother's Day and Gurudev's birthday on May 10.

The students and parents chanted the opening prayers and Guru Strotram. Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji was remembered by all. His selfless work in bringing Vedic knowledge to all in a simplified form was acknowledged with gratitude and the 108 Chinmaya Namavali was chanted as a tribute to Gurudev.

After the chanting was over, the students showed their love and respect towards their mothers by offering tilak, rice and flowers. All this was conducted with the chanting of the Matra Stavanam Stotram. The ceremony concluded with aarati and prasad. Swamiji's mother presided over the program.



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Maligning of Hinduism in Textbooks – CMLA Members Urged to Act

CHINMAYA MISSION
LOS ANGELES

Acharya Arumuganathaswami, the Managing Editor of the Kauai Hindu Monastery's popular journal, 'Hinduism Today' visited Chinmaya Rameshwaram as part of his nationwide efforts to inform the Hindu community of the egregious inaccuracies on Hinduism currently being taught in middle schools in the US. In particular, the Acharya emphasized the nonfactual content that is being taught to sixth graders in California schools. During his visit and talk to the Bala Vihar gathering on May 10, he was accompanied by Sadhaka Jayanatha, photographer and web-designer, also from the monastery.

Arumuganathaswami has contacted legislators at the state and district levels and brought to their attention inaccuracies in the textbooks. It has been partially due to his efforts, that some clearly incorrect information has been rescinded. However efforts to have correct material inserted has proved to be an arduous task as there are various lobbies even within the Hindu community.

While content pertaining to the Abrahamic traditions have been authored by members of the respective traditions that has not been the case with Hinduism, the Acharya pointed out. He produced empirical evidence of the effect on the younger generation.

He showed a particularly poignant video of a middle-schooler testifying in front of a panel of legislators. She told them how her teacher had segregated her class into four groups representing the four castes and instructed each group to visually essay out the functioning of each caste. At the end of the session it was clear to all students that Hinduism was a religion to be despised. Another student testified that his teacher relied on him to teach the Hinduism portions of the text as he had brought the inaccuracies of the text to her notice.

The Swami concluded that it was left to the Hindu Diaspora to persuade the schools to amend the textbooks. He suggested that the community call local principals, vice-principals and sixth grade history teachers and educate them about the basic facts of Hinduism.

TOP

Sounds of Dhrupad by Gundecha Brothers Fill Chinmaya Rameshwaram

250 people attended and delighted in the Gundecha brothers concert on May 9 at Rameshwaram. Pandit Umakant and Pandit Ramakant Gundecha are the leading exponents of the Dhrupad style of music and their expertise in the form shone through for the eager audience.

Kalanjali
Chinmaya Mission, Los Angeles

Pt. Umakanth talked about the origins of the Dhrupad style and its uniqueness. In the two and half hour concert, the brothers sang in Raga Saraswati as well as rendered a few choice Shiva bhajans in Shivaranjani and other ragas.

A highlight of the Kalanjali organized evening was the additional accompaniment of saxophone by Giovanni and silver flute by Virginia. The Italian couple joined the Gundecha brothers blending their musical notes in unison.

The program concluded with Chinmaya Mission members singing the birthday song “Janma Dinam Idam" to celebrate Pt. Umakant’s birthday after which he cut a cake.

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Stotra Dhara Testing Held In Rameshwaram

Participants gathered together at Rameshwaram on the morning of May 30 for Stotra Dhara testing at different levels. Stotra Dhara is a self-paced program that encourages Balavihar children to memorize and correctly chant shlokas from the Chinmaya Stotra Dhara book. The shlokas are grouped into four levels according to level of difficulty, starting from the elementary opening prayers *Sah Na Vavtu* to prayers with more complex pronunciation like *Shiva Manas Puja*. The complete list of shlokas and their audio recordings are available on the website. Parents are urged to register their children for future testing. For more details, contact Gomathi Ravichandran at gomathi.ravichandran@gmail.com.

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Please send articles and pictures for publication to Nimmi Raghunathan at nimmicmla@gmail.com

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